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ABSTRACT

Librarianship has undergone a radical change in recent years, which will be continued in the future. Whereas previously the administration of media was most important, nowadays an ever increasing willingness to provide a service is required. In addition to the essential restructuring of libraries, a generational change is taking place within the core workforce. On the one hand this offers opportunities, but is also fraught with problems. This paper focuses on human resource management and shows ways towards the further development of libraries, which cause the least friction. First considered is the influence of the age structure of the library staff on the handling of innovations in librarianship, as well as changes in the daily work. Following this, various options available to the company management are presented, to enable them to disengage the further development of the library from the influence of the age structure. Finally the issue of the framework for a dynamic and conflict-free generational change in librarianship is addressed. (AEF)

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The challenges to human resources development of libraries in times of radical and generational changes

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Librarianship has undergone a radical change in recent years, which will be continued in the future. Networking and the implementation of new technology, as well as electronic media, have resulted in changes in all areas. These do not however only relate to the change of media form from print to electronic, but also to working methods and procedures and to the way of thinking or rather the prevailing paradigm in the leadership of the library. Whereas previously the administration of media was most important, nowadays an ever increasing willingness to provide a service is required. In addition to the essential restructuring of libraries, a generational change is taking place within the core workforce. On the one hand this offers opportunities, but is also fraught with problems. This contribution is therefore concerned with human resource management and shows ways towards the further development of libraries, which cause the least friction.

First the influence of the age structure of the library staff on the handling of innovations in librarianship, as well as changes in the daily work will be considered. Following on from this various options available to the company management will be presented, to enable them to disengage the further development of the library from the influence of the age structure. Finally

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the issue of the framework for a dynamic and conflict-free generational change in librarianship will be addressed.

The age structure within the staff of a library influences the handling of innovations and changes in librarianship. Generally speaking older employees are inclined to cling to familiar procedures, because rethinking and learning anew take a great deal of time and effort and tend to be more difficult. It is often the case that the improvements or increase in productivity resulting from the changes in procedure are not immediately clear to everyone. Possibly years ago the employees created and worked out just that, which today is called „out of date" and needs to be changed. Here emotional elements play a large role. Consequently not only is the knowledge of new technology lacking, but there is also an aversion to change which goes as far as downright opposition, so that innovations in spite of their clear advantages are only accepted with difficulty because of emotional reasons. However experience shows that there are also employees belonging to the older generation, who vehemently work towards continuing change and who are the driving force behind it.

With young members of staff new to librarianship, there exists an equally differentiated picture. There are employees who immediately want to radically change everything, which has existed up until now and believe that the library will only benefit from new practices and ways of thinking. No consideration is shown for ready-formed structures, procedures and psychological factors. There are however more moderate innovators, who encourage sensible changes without a radical break and work towards a continuous change in librarianship. And of course among young librarians there are also cautious members of staff, timid of innovation, who prefer to carry on doing everything as it has functioned for a long time and miss the opportunity for improvement and therefore of keeping pace with the general development in librarianship.

The larger numerically the group is who opposes change, the more difficult and drawn-out it will be to break open encrusted ways of thinking and established procedures. The more new employees come from outside and have no knowledge of or question these existing structures, the easier it is to initiate a process of change.

What is the task of the personnel management of a library in this situation? Here a completely individual personnel management is required, which responds to the respective personalities. Older employees with a disinclination to change must be removed of their aversion to anything new. With persuasive power as regards the sense and advantages of the changed situation, as well as with a clear indication that there will be no possible exceptions to the progressing development, co-operation with changes and a responsibility for the results must be reached.
The older employees, who themselves are the power behind changes, should be especially encouraged, because they shape the changes on the basis of established professional experience and so possess resources which are particularly valuable for the library. In addition they can act as mediators between other employees who are opposed to changes or of a more sceptical disposition, because they belong to the same generation and so psychologically and sociologically have better access to them.
As far as young members of staff are concerned, the personnel management should be in a position to moderate the radical changers with regard to reducing potential conflict. Young

members of staff who are adverse to innovation should on the other hand be encouraged to take an active part in the process of change and be shown the possibilities they have to distinguish themselves. The moderated innovators should be supported, because they bring changes forward without causing too much of a disturbance to the working atmosphere or a disruption to the organisation of the work.

Proceeding without prejudice is important in all these considerations. Older members of staff must not be excluded, but their practical knowledge should be used and further developed. Sceptical objections are definitely profitable because they effect the careful checking of ideas and therefore help to prevent hasty actions and badly thought-out concepts. Also the opportunities of continuing professional education should still be available to older members of staff, indeed they should be encouraged to take them up. For only if they have the opportunity to learn new techniques and if they are up to date in librarianship they can actively carry responsibility for changes. The danger of a rejection of the continuing development, of which they themselves are a part, is in any case smaller.

As far as young members of staff are concerned it is important not to curb them too strongly at the beginning of their career and therefore to demotivate them. On the contrary they must be supported and so encouraged to act responsibly and to think of the whole context. An essential prerequisite for this is to continually recruit good young talent to librarianship. Here though the problem of the selection of new appointments confronts us. How can a good member of staff be recognised in advance? There are endless studies on this subject, various techniques ranging from attitude tests, to interviews in a large group, to assessment centres. The cost and effort involved in these techniques is however relatively high - the success not guaranteed. Generally speaking: the longer one knows someone, the better one can assess them. Therefore the appointment of members of staff, who have previously been trained in one's own library and who have been rated as good, can be a promising way to generate the necessary new blood. In addition to stronger training activity in library practice, libraries should present themselves in public as an exciting profession and actively approach prospective trainees. A corresponding information policy towards schools, universities, job centres, as well as appropriate public relations work for librarianship as a whole, could open the way for further young talent.

Altogether the problem of the „generational change" can be summarised as follows: the old as well as the new generation contribute important aspects to librarianship. A well-balanced blend of experience and „new wind" offers libraries the best pre-requisites for the future. Good co-operation and a mutual acceptance of differing points of view are important.

In order, meanwhile, to shape the continuing development of the library as independently as possible of the influence of the age structure, further instruments are available to the business management. One possibility is the written documentation of experiences and developments. The point is, to determine in writing as many relevant events, structures and procedures as possible and in this way to utilise these for the library independently of people. If an employee leaves or retires the respective successor is better able to become acquainted with, and to continue with the day-to-day work. In case of changes in structures and proceedings these records are an important basis for understanding the status quo and building on this for making alterations. A further

advantage is, that if there is a written definition, a factual discussion automatically takes place regarding the contents, which are taken for granted in the day-to-day work and no longer questioned. In this way potential changes can be uncovered. Therefore the documentation fulfils several purposes as an instrument for the business management. It elevates the respective scope of tasks on to a neutral level, independent of people and at the same time encourages a critical reflection of the status quo.

A further possibility of moderating the influences of the age structure on library policy is the formation of groups. This can be taken into account in the departmental structure of the library, by consciously seeking a kind of „age balance" in all departments and older and younger members of staff specifically having to work together in each department. Both sides can profit in this way: the younger members of staff from the experience of the older and the older members of staff from the introduction of the most up to date level of training and new technology from the younger ones. There can however be problems because of the hierarchical structure. Older members of staff tend to be in a higher position in the hierarchy than younger ones. They are therefore in a position to block suggestions from young members of staff, in order to follow their usual practices, to adhere to the traditions of which they have become fond. This would result in the demotivation of young employees and the blocking of changes. If however young employees are senior to older employees, due to service limitations (senior, upper, middle service), this can lead to problems. If the superiors are of the opinion that everything hitherto has been bad and only completely new methods should be pursued, older members of staff quickly feel devalued, if librarianship, which they have previously built up and carried the responsibility for, is suddenly no longer found to be up to date. This can lead to an opposition to changes, which is really more founded on personal or rather emotional factors. A promising way out of this dilemma is therefore the formation of panels to further co-operation between the generations. Quality circle or group work should make it possible to contribute one's professional competence (long years of experience or the latest level of training) for the use of the library, independent of age or hierarchical position.

The set of problems described above, that frequently older members of staff are high-up in the hierarchy and use their authority to prevent changes, can be counteracted by the business management with the help of the setting-up of staff units. These are independent of the hierarchical and departmental structure, only responsible to the management. Examples of staff units could be controlling or quality management. These „independent employees" of a staff unit can view the library neutrally and, with regard to the structure and to the working procedures, as a homogeneous whole, similar to a management consultant. They are not burdened with the daily, purely library work, but their task consists of analysing the development of librarianship as a whole and deriving out of this the consequences, opportunities and risks for the own library and transposing these into strategic concepts.

In addition to these structural possibilities there also exist personnel management tools, in order to corroborate a continuing development of the library. Belonging to this are all measures of human resources development, which offer employees prospects for their personal development. In this way for both sides - library and employees - a positive development of young employees via controlled support can be initiated at an early stage. But personnel development is just as

important for older employees, so that they do not „inwardly resign" and only try to bridge the time until their pension. Also perspectives should still be open for older members of staff, to reconcile their personal wishes and particular abilities with the needs of the library. The library cannot dispense with the potential of older members of staff. Here, for example, further partial retirement models should open up ways for a gradual exit for employees.

In the same way, retaining good employees is a part of personnel management. With a staffing schedule, which is as flexible as possible, and the creation of material and immaterial incentives, an attempt should be made to keep particularly productive and motivated members of staff in the library and to prevent a migration to other organisations. Supporting the compatibility of family and career is also part of this, by which one facilitates the possibility of returning to work after a break to have a family, especially for women. It is possible that the necessity for a complete break can be reduced by a flexible organisation of working hours or by the possibility of tele-working. In this way the potential of young mothers (and fathers!) can at least partly be retained for the library and the emotional commitment to a flexible organisation, which reconciles private and working interests, can definitely increase.

In order to be able to put into action the above-mentioned instruments of business management and to achieve a dynamic, but conflict-free generational change, several basic conditions are necessary.

Firstly, a flexible staffing schedule must be made possible. Unfortunately, frequently narrow contractual guidelines often limit the employment possibilities of employees, for whom, according to salary or rather wage-group, only particular kinds of jobs can be allowed. Precisely the innovative and more creative tasks are earmarked first for the higher wage-groups. This limits the room to move for younger members of staff, who have just arrived, and often prevents the formation of teams consisting of younger and older employees or rather the formation of working parties as mentioned above. Additionally, it limits the possibilities for motivation via job enlargement and being responsible for one's own actions.

Promotion on the grounds of age or length of service should be replaced by a more performance-related upgrading. In this way older employees, who wish to be promoted, are encouraged just as much to work hard for the continuous development of the library and it can be assumed that they are therefore more open to improvements and changes of factors, which have existed up until now. On the other hand, young colleagues have with performance-related promotion a better opportunity of prematurely climbing the ladder, if the library accordingly benefits from their commitment. Performance-related promotion in any case creates incentives to actively partake in the future of the library, independent of the employee's age.

In order to bind a motivated core workforce, it has already been mentioned that the compatibility of career and family must be supported and personal interests must be brought into line with those of the library. For this, flexible modalities of part-time employment as well as tele-work offer solutions. For the setting-up of a tele-working place, in addition to the administrative anchorage, the financial capital for the technical equipment must also be made available. In most cases this capital cannot be solely produced by the libraries. Therefore special funds from the university or

communal budgets are necessary, which are already partly available now within programmes supporting the equality of women.

Finally, the above-mentioned tools can indeed only assist in bringing about a generational change in times of restructuring in libraries in a way as conflict-free as possible and without bad „breaks" for the library. In any case, the success very largely depends on the personalities of those involved.

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